

9. Putting Glenn Moore's Alleged Sabbatical Year of 68/69 to the Test

A few months after Glenn's protest over my only critiquing one of the Sabbatical years upon which he rests his "weakest" case, I decided to examine one of the years that Glenn lists as having "the strongest historical support" for having been a Sabbatical year. This is the "year" dating from the fall of 68 CE to the fall of 69 CE. In fact, Glenn is so certain that the year 68/69 was a Sabbatical year that he refers to it as "A Known Sabbatical Year." Shown below is a screen shot taken from Glenn's "Jubilee Calendar" spreadsheet, which I accessed from his web site:¹

4053	
380	
A Known Sabbatical Year (68/69 CE)	(68/69 CE) is a known Sabbatical Year based upon the Talmud (B. Taanith, 29a) which states that the second temple was destroyed in a post-Sabbatical year. The year the temple was destroyed would be 70 CE or 381 SE (Seleucid Era). This is also based upon Rabbi Jose ben Khalapha who states that the Sabbatical Year took place in the year prior to the destruction of the temple (<i>Seder Olam</i> , 30).
Fall 68	35

How can Glenn be so sure that 68/69 CE was a "known" Sabbatical year? In a nutshell, Glenn attributes his historical dating evidence to a man named Benedict Zuckermann², whose conclusions Glenn has cited as being reliable. If you read footnote #1 in chapter 8, which was actually composed by Glenn, you know he is confident of Zuckermann's dating accuracy. For example, Glenn wrote:

While some chronologists (such as Wacholder and others) have attempted to contradict the findings of Zuckermann, a careful examination of Zuckermann's findings strongly suggest that his original conclusions are the correct ones all along.

Since Glenn had already criticized me for having examined a claim that, by his own admission, was his "weakest historical date," I decided to take a closer look at the year 68/69 CE, a year to which he unabashedly ascribes quite a bit more certainty. Here, again, is an excerpt from what Glenn wrote:

Sabbatical years have been documented and confirmed for BCE years 332/331, 164/163, 136/135, 38/37, and CE years 68/69 and 138/139. Zuckerman himself lists the years 136/135, 38/37, and 68/69 as having the strongest historical support.

How "strong" is Zuckermann's conclusion regarding the year 68/69? As we are about to see, it is weak at best. First, I need to point out that Benedict Zuckermann based his understanding that the year 68/69 was a Sabbatical year on a translation of a 2nd century work known as the *Seder Olam*.³ The following excerpt, taken from the online encyclopedia *Wikipedia*, validates that Zuckermann based his designation of 68/69 as a Sabbatical year on the *Seder Olam*:

¹ Glenn Moore's Jubilee Calendar spreadsheet may be accessed at the following URL:

<http://www.itsaboutthattime.net/XLS%20Files/Jubilee%20Calendar.xls>

² Benedict Zuckermann (October 9, 1818 – December 17, 1891) was a German scientist. Zuckermann's name was mentioned earlier in this study (in a commentary authored by Glenn Moore in which he wrote that Zuckermann's original dating conclusions "are the correct ones all along"). One of Zuckermann's works, *A Treatise on the Sabbatical Cycle and the Jubilee*, was cited by Glenn.

³ For those who are not familiar with the *Seder Olam*, this is a widely respected, yet ancient, document, attributed to have been authored around the year 160 CE. Notice what *Wikipedia* offers regarding the *Seder Olam*: "The principal author of the *Seder Olam*, Rabbi Jose, was a pupil of the famous Rabbi Akiba. Akiba was a young man when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple. On such an important issue as the year in which the Temple was destroyed, it would be logical that Jose's ideas were taken from his mentor and his mentor's contemporaries." Taken from the following URL:

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shmita>.

The final text considered by Zuckermann was a passage in the [Seder Olam](#) that relates the destruction of the Second Temple to a Sabbatical year, an event that is known from secular history to have happened in the summer of 70 CE. Zuckermann interpreted the [Seder Olam](#) text as stating that this happened in a year after a Sabbatical year, thus placing a Sabbatical in 68/69 CE.⁴

As previously mentioned by Glenn Moore, and now affirmed by the *Wikipedia* reference, Benedict Zuckermann concluded that the year 68/69 was a Sabbatical year. This reference also affirms that Zuckermann's basis for making this determination was the *Seder Olam*. By the way, Glenn himself, in a separate writing that I located on his website, expresses agreement with Zuckermann's position that the *Seder Olam* proves that the year 68/69 was a Sabbatical year:

According to the *Babylonian Talmud* (in the *Taanith*), the second temple at Jerusalem was destroyed one year prior to a Sabbatical year.⁵ The *Seder Olam*, through the teachings of Yose ben Khalaphta, is in complete agreement with that view. Many, but not all, rabbinic authorities of that general time also are in agreement with the chronology of the *Seder Olam*, which teaches that the Sabbatical year came one year prior to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Since the city of Jerusalem (and the temple) is well known to have been destroyed in 70 CE, that would make 68/69 CE a Sabbatical year—according to the *Seder Olam*, and the *Taanith*. Sabbatical years were known to have been kept right up until the Bar Kochba revolt and the *Seder Olam* was written about 3 decades later, likely based upon information compiled decades before. This means that the author of *Seder Olam* would have been quite capable of tracking Sabbatical years and could do a much better job of it than we could almost 2000 years later.⁶

Thus far, we have seen that Glenn Moore trusts the dating conclusions offered by 19th century German scientist Benedict Zuckermann, and we know that Zuckermann based his conclusion that the year 68/69

⁴ This excerpt was taken from the *Wikipedia* article "Shmita," which may be read in its entirety by accessing the following URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shmita>.

⁵ Stating that the temple was destroyed a year prior to the Sabbatical year is an apparent parapraxis on Glenn's part. On the one hand, I could cite this as evidence that Glenn contradicts himself, since he states it was destroyed in a year that followed the Sabbatical year in the same paragraph. However, since it's clear that Glenn actually believes the temple was destroyed in a year that followed the Sabbatical year, I will attribute his error to a parapraxis. He cites The Babylonian Talmud (*Taanith* 29a) as his source, and this writing attributes the temple's destruction to a year that followed the Sabbatical year. Here is the pertinent quote: "Good things come to pass on an auspicious day, and bad things on an unlucky day. It is reported that the day on which the First Temple was destroyed was the eve of the ninth of Ab, a Sunday, and in the year following the Sabbatical year, and the Mishmar of the family of Jehoiarib were on duty and the Levites were chanting the Psalms standing on their Duchan (platform). And what Psalm did they recite? - [The Psalm] containing the verse, 'And He hath brought upon them their own iniquity, and will cut them off in their own evil.' And hardly had they time to say, 'The Lord our God will cut them off,' when the heathens came and captured them. The same thing too happened in the Second Temple."

⁶ From "An Excerpt from Chapter 10 of *Discovering the Jewish Messiah Within the Prophecy of Daniel 9*," by W. Glenn Moore, pp. 3-4. I accessed this document at the following URL: <http://www.itsaboutthattime.net/PDF%20Files/Discover%20Messiah%20Ch10.pdf>.

NOTE: Glenn also refers to the *Taanith*, which, as we are about to see in the article authored by Rodger C. Young in *The Jewish Bible Quarterly*, contains the quotation from the *Seder Olam*. In view of the fact that the *Taanith* (*Tosefta Taanit* 3:9) only offers a *quote* from the *Seder Olam* instead of the testimony of another scholar, it really isn't fair to list it as supporting evidence alongside the *Seder Olam*.

was a Sabbatical year on the *Seder Olam*. The question that we need to ask at this point is, “*Did Benedict Zuckermann properly translate the Seder Olam in arriving at his conclusion?*” The answer is no. As we explore this further, we need to bear in mind, as elucidated above by Glenn Moore, that the dating in question is associated with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. According to Glenn, the Sabbatical year came one year *prior* to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. Another way of putting it would be to say that this tragic event took place in a year that *followed* a Sabbatical year. Is this what we find in the *Seder Olam*? Did the author of *Seder Olam* write that the temple was destroyed in a year that *followed* a Sabbatical year?

The following information, found in the same *Wikipedia* article referenced above, questions Zuckermann's findings, citing his mistranslation of the *Seder Olam*. The encyclopedia article from which the following excerpt is taken is entitled “Shmita”⁷:

Seder Olam and the Sabbaticals associated with the destructions of the Temples [edit]

The principal author of the *Seder Olam*, Rabbi Jose, was a pupil of the famous *Rabbi Akiba*. Akiba was a young man when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and burned the Temple. On such an important issue as the year in which the Temple was destroyed, it would be logical that Jose's ideas were taken from his mentor and his mentor's contemporaries.

Chapter 30 of the *Seder Olam* gives the year that both Temples were destroyed as *ve-motsae sheviit* (וּמוֹצֵאֵי שִׁבְעִית). Guggenheimer's recent translation^[14] renders this phrase as “at the end of a Sabbatical year,” thus unambiguously supporting the Wacholder calendar that starts a Sabbatical year in the fall of 69 CE. The problem, however, is that many translations of the *Seder Olam* render the phrase as “in the year after a Sabbatical year” or its equivalent. This was the sense adopted by Zuckermann when citing the *Seder Olam* as supportive of his calendar of Sabbatical years. The same Hebrew phrase is used in the Babylonian Talmud when citing this passage from the *Seder Olam* (the Talmuds are written in the similar Aramaic language), and some modern translations of the Talmud into English translate the phrase in the sense given by Guggenheimer, while others translate it in the sense of “the year after.” The *Seder Olam* uses the same phrase regarding a Sabbatical year for the destruction of both Temples, so that its testimony in this regard is important for dating the *shemittot* in both pre-exilic and post-exilic times. Therefore it would seem necessary to closely examine the phrase in the original Hebrew when making chronological decisions. Unfortunately, this was not done, either by Zuckermann or Wacholder, when citing the *Seder Olam*'s testimony as decisive for their particular calendars of Sabbatical years. Most interpreters have simply relied on an existing translation, and that translation may have been unduly influenced by an attempt to make the translation consistent with the chronology of the *geonim* that placed the end of the Second Temple in a post-Sabbatical year.

At least one study has addressed this problem, arguing from both a linguistic standpoint and from a study of related texts in the *Seder Olam* that the phrase *ve-motsae sheviit* should be translated as something close to “and in the latter part of a Sabbatical year,” consistent with Guggenheimer's translation and Wacholder's calendar.^[15] This recent study argues that a comparative study of the word *motsae* (literally, “goings-out”) does not support any sense of “after” (“after a Sabbatical year”). Further, the reference of the *Seder Olam* to a Sabbatical year associated with *Jehoiachin* is in keeping with a Sabbatical year when the First Temple was burned a few years later, but the *Seder Olam* would be in conflict with itself if the phrase in chapter 30 was interpreted as saying that the burning was in a post-Sabbatical year. It would be hoped that studies which interpret the *Seder Olam* passage as supporting “the year after a Sabbatical year” will do a similar analysis to see if linguistic and contextual arguments can construe the *Seder Olam* passage to support the “year-after” position.

As displayed by the above reference, Zuckermann erred in translating the Hebrew phrase *ve-motsae sheviit* as “in the year after a Sabbatical year.” A scholar named Heinrich Guggenheimer demonstrated that this phrase should have been translated “at the end of a Sabbatical year.” Obviously, there is a critical difference between “in the year *after* a Sabbatical year” and “at the *end* of a Sabbatical year.” As the saying goes, “What a difference a year makes!” In this case, a year makes a *huge* difference. It completely skews Glenn's chronological dating of Sabbatical years and further illustrates the futility in attempting to base our dating of historical events on the years in which we *think* they occurred.

⁷ The entire article may be read by accessing the following URL: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shmita>.

Of course, I anticipate that Glenn will question the findings of the author of the above *Wikipedia* article, and I certainly wouldn't blame him for doing so. I checked out one of the sources from which the *Wikipedia* author obtained his information (footnote #15 above), and found that it came from a credible source, *The Jewish Bible Quarterly*. I located the full magazine article online, and I have decided to incorporate a sizable excerpt here. The article appeared in the July-September 2006 issue of *The Jewish Bible Quarterly*, and is entitled "Seder Olam and the Sabbaticals Associated With the Two Destructions of Jerusalem":

Seder Olam, written in the latter half of the second century CE, is attributed by the Talmud (*Niddah* 46b, *Yebamot* 82b) to Rabbi Yose ben Halaphta, a disciple of the famous Rabbi Akiba. A modern translator of the text, Heinrich Guggenheimer, says of this work:

The authoritative Rabbinical interpretation of the historical passages of the Bible is given in *Midrash Seder 'Olam*. *Seder 'Olam* is a composition of Tannaitic material, a companion to the Mishneh. It is the basis of the historical world view of the Babylonian Talmud and of our counting of years "from the Creation."

The *Seder Olam* (hereinafter SO) is quoted or referred to several times in the Babylonian Talmud and once in the Jerusalem Talmud. Most quotations of the SO in the Babylonian Talmud do not begin with "Rabbi Yose said"; the omission of the name of the authority is usually regarded as a sign that the following quotation was accepted as authoritative by the scholars of the Talmud, with no need for the presentation of alternative views.

Since Rabbi Yose and his disciples who may have contributed to the SO were in the mainstream of early rabbinic scholarship, and since they lived close enough to the time of the destruction of the Second Temple, the comments of the SO on this event have been given considerable weight by modern scholars. The reference in SO Chapter 30 to a Sabbatical year associated with the fall of Jerusalem has therefore figured largely in discussions regarding the chronology of the Sabbatical years during the time of the Second Temple. The other sources that must be studied in determining the dates of post-exilic Sabbatical [*shemithah*] years are I and II Maccabees, some passages in Josephus, and various legal documents found in the caves of Wadi Murabba'at in the Judean desert. The first definitive study of these sources (except those of Wadi Murabba'at) was that of Benedict Zuckermann, who argued from the known movements of Alexander and the passage in Josephus referring to Alexander that a Sabbatical year was observed beginning in Tishri of 332 BCE. Zuckermann's consequent calendar of Sabbatical years, published in 1857, was accepted by the Jewish settlers in Israel in the late 19th Century. Thus a Sabbatical year was observed beginning in Tishri of 2000 CE in Israel; from 332 BCE to 2000 CE is 2331 years, or 333 Sabbatical cycles, remembering that there was no year zero at the BCE/CE divide.

Not all scholars, however, accepted Zuckermann's dates. The most significant challenge has been from Ben Zion Wacholder, who placed the *shemithah* associated with Alexander one year later than did Zuckermann. For the time associated with the fall of the Second Temple, Zuckermann's calendar began a Sabbatical year in the fall (Tishri) of 68 CE, whereas Wacholder's calendar began it in the fall of 69. Since the destruction of the city and the Temple occurred in the summer of 70 CE, this would have been within the Sabbatical year by Wacholder's calendar of *shemithot*, but in a post-Sabbatical year by Zuckermann's calendar. Which of these two options does the SO support?

To answer this question, it is necessary to examine the relevant passage in SO 30 with some care. It will first be given in Guggenheimer's translation:

R. Yose says: A day of rewards attracts rewards and a day of guilt attracts guilt. You find it said that the destruction of the First Temple was at the end of Sabbath, at the end of a Sabbatical year, when the priests of the family of Yehoiariv was [sic] officiating, on the Ninth of Ab, and the same happened the second time.

Wacholder used the following translation of this same SO passage:

Putting Glenn Moore's Alleged Sabbatical Year of 68/69 to the Test

Rabbi Jose says: 'Favorable judgment forbode favorable days and guilty judgments guilty days. You find it said: When the Temple was destroyed for the first time, that happened on a day after the Sabbath (Sunday), during a post-Sabbatical year, and during the Watch of Jehoiarib, and on the ninth of Ab; and so also when the Second (Temple was destroyed).'

The first translation says that the destructions were within a Sabbatical year and on a Sabbath day, whereas the second translation says they were in a year after a Sabbatical year and on the day after the Sabbath. Since both translations started from the same text (in rabbinic Hebrew), it is necessary to examine that text to see which translation is correct. The relevant passage is *oto ha-yom motsae shabat hayah, ve-motsae sheviit haytah*.

The important difference between these two translations centers on the word *motsae*. The destructions were in the *motsae* of a Sabbatical year and in the *motsae* of a Sabbath day. Should *motsae* be translated as "at the end of" (Guggenheimer), or in some sense as "the day/year after" (Wacholder)?

Motsa (plural construct *motsae*) is the participial form of the common verb *yatsa*, which has the basic meaning "to go out, to go forth." A literal rendering of *motsa* is therefore "the going-out" or "the going-forth." This understanding definitely favors Guggenheimer's translation, since it is easy to see how the "goings-out" of a year or a day could express the latter part of the time-period, but a time still within the period. The only way that the meaning "after" would be justified would be if there were some idiomatic usage that could be found which suggested this meaning. Are there any such idiomatic usages?

We first look in the Scripture, where the word *motsa* occurs twenty-seven times. In Psalm 19:7 (19:6, English Bible) it refers to the "going forth" of the sun. In Psalm 107:33,35 and II Kings 2:21 it is translated as "watersprings" or "spring of the waters." **All of the usages in Scripture can immediately be associated with the idea of going forth or going out. None can be associated with any idea of "after" or "the thing after."**

As to rabbinic writing, we can confine the search to the meaning of *motsa* to the places where the passage in question is quoted and also to references in the *SO* itself.

The *SO* passage is quoted in *Tosefta Taanit* 3:9, where the translation into English is as follows: "When the Temple was destroyed the first time, it was the day **after** the Sabbath and the year **after** the Sabbatical year." This provides no new information to help settle the meaning of the original Hebrew, because we are relying on a modern interpretation. The Jerusalem Talmud (*Taanit* 4:5) uses exactly the same translation, which is not surprising because it is by the same translator. The Babylonian Talmud quotes the passage from *SO* 30 three times, in *Arakin* 11b, *Arakin* 12a, and in *Taanit* 29a. In *Arakin* 11b it is translated as follows: "The day on which the first Temple was destroyed was the ninth of Ab, and it was **at the going out** of the Sabbath, and **at the end of** the seventh [Sabbatical] year." Similarly, *Arakin* 12a quotes Rabbi Yose as saying "at the first time it was **at the end** of the seventh year."

All that has been shown by this is that the *SO* passage has been interpreted in different ways by modern translators, and **we still have not produced any instance showing that *motsa* has any idiomatic meaning that would allow it to be interpreted as "sometime after," which is necessary to justify those translations that place the two destructions in post-Sabbatical years.** There are, however, some passages in the rabbinic writings that allow us to settle this question definitively. The first of these is in *Abodah Zara* 9b. In this passage, Rabbi Huna ben Joshua gives a formula that allows calculating the year of a Sabbatical cycle for any year subsequent to the destruction of the Second Temple. His formula is to count the number of years since the destruction, add one, and then (in essence) to divide this number by seven. The remainder after dividing gives the year of the Sabbatical cycle. The important information that this conveys is that year one after the destruction of the Temple was considered year one of a Sabbatical cycle, so that the Temple was destroyed in a Sabbatical year. This shows how one of the contributors to the Talmud understood the *SO* 30 passage regarding the Sabbatical years associated with the two destructions of Jerusalem.

Putting Glenn Moore's Alleged Sabbatical Year of 68/69 to the Test

It is a matter of some interest that Wacholder cited the formula as given by Rabbi Huna to support a Sabbatical year in 69/70, thus verifying his calendar vs. that of Zuckermann, which put the Sabbatical year one year earlier.

At least one passage in the *SO* itself shows that *SO* 30 must be translated so as to place the fall of the First and Second Temples in Sabbatical years. In *SO* 25, Jehoiachin's exile is said to begin in the fourth year of a Sabbatical cycle. The city fell ten years later, in his 11th year of captivity, which was also the 11th (non-accession) year of Zedekiah's reign. This was therefore 14 years after the Sabbatical year from which the beginning of Jehoiachin's captivity was measured. Consequently that year, the year of the fall of Jerusalem, was also a Sabbatical year. This is perhaps the most definitive text that can be found that shows that *motsae* did not have any connotation of "after" to the people who wrote the *SO*, and so it cannot be translated that way in *SO* 30. **The *SO* 30 passage must be interpreted to say that both destructions of Jerusalem occurred on a Sabbath day and in a Sabbatical year.**⁸

The author of the above article thus demonstrates that Zuckermann's conclusion that the temple was destroyed during a year following a Sabbatical year is off the mark. Zuckermann's conclusion was that the year 68/69 was a Sabbatical year, but Heinrich Guggenheimer established that, instead, the Sabbatical year was in 69/70, and according to the above article, this understanding was supported by Huna ben Joshua, who, as I understand it, was a fourth-century Babylonian Talmudic scholar.⁹

While we certainly have our share of disagreements with the above author with regard to his method of reckoning the Jubilee cycle, as well as other theological matters, we find it interesting that he at least recognizes the proper translation of the Hebrew phrase *ve motsae*, thus reflecting his agreement that the temple was destroyed *during*, not *after*, a Sabbatical year. Of course, with whichever year we conclude was the Sabbatical year at or near the time when the temple was destroyed, we are left to *presume* that Judaism was correctly reckoning Sabbatical years at that time. June and I personally remain opposed to relying on man's attempts to date ancient historical events in order to validate one's understanding with regard to when a Sabbatical year or Jubilee year was observed.

Later in our study, we will find that Zuckermann, the chronologist whose dating conclusions Glenn is on record as stating are "the correct ones all along," *disagreed* with at least *one* of Glenn's "confirmed" Sabbatical years.

⁸ From "Seder Olam and the Sabbaticals Associated With the Two Destructions of Jerusalem," by Rodger C. Young, *The Jewish Bible Quarterly* (July-September 2006) Volume 34, Number 3, pp. 175-179. As an interesting side note, the above author shares Glenn Moore's position that the Jubilee cycle consists of 49 years. This is confirmed in a separate article authored by Young in another magazine, *Bible and Spade*. However, unlike Glenn, Young does *not* believe that "Year 50 = Year 1." Rather, he believes that "Year 49 = Year 50," as evidenced by the following quote: "There are also practical considerations that show that the Jubilee cycle was 49 years instead of 50. If the Jubilee was a separate year following the seventh Sabbatical year, then there would be two successive years of voluntary refraining from sowing and reaping, and there is no indication of such anywhere in Scripture. All these considerations establish that the Jubilee cycle was 49 years, and the Jubilee year was identical to the seventh Sabbatical year." (From "Evidence for Inerrancy from a Second Unexpected Source: The Jubilee and Sabbatical Cycles," by Rodger C. Young, *Bible and Spade Magazine*, Vol. 21, No. 4 [Fall 2008 issue], Associates for Biblical Research, Akron, PA, pp. 115 & 121. As the reader has likely noticed, June and I are most definitely not in agreement with Rodger C. Young with regard to the length of the Jubilee cycle. Nevertheless, we find it interesting that he at least understands that *ve motsae* is correctly translated "in the latter part of" rather than "after."

⁹ Frankly, I had never heard of Huna ben Joshua until I read this article. I am unable to locate a specific biography for him, but I did find that he was contemporary with another fourth-century Jewish Talmudist named Bebai ben Abaye, whose short bio is found on *Wikipedia* at the following URL: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bebai_ben_Abaye